

REMARKS

This application has been amended so as to place it in condition for allowance at the time of the next Official Action.

The Official Action rejects claims 25, 27, 29-34, 45, and 47 under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over SAITOU et al. 5,162,240 in view of WATANABE et al. 6,278,148. The Official Action goes on to state, however, that claims 26 and 28 are allowable but for their dependence from rejected base claims.

Applicants have amended the claims so that each remaining claim recites features of at least one of the allowable claims. Specifically, claim 25 is amended to incorporate the features of allowable claim 26. Correspondingly, allowable claim 28 is amended into independent form by incorporating the features of original claim 25. This amendment is accompanied by the cancellation of claims 29, 30, 32 and 45. Applicants have amended some of the remaining dependent claims to ensure their agreement with the independent claims in their current form.

Applicants have also amended independent claim 47 to further recite features of allowable claim 26. Such amendment should therefore place claim 47 also in condition for immediate allowance.

In light of the amendments described above, particularly in context of the stated allowability of claims 26 and 28, applicants believe that the present application is in

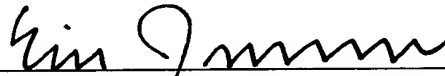
condition for allowance and an early indication of the same is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner has any questions or requires further clarification of any of the above points, the Examiner may contact the undersigned attorney so that this application may continue to be expeditiously advanced.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 25-0120 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. §1.17.

Respectfully submitted,

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